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THE MISSION OF RICHARD WAGNER.

BY JOSEPH SOHN.

“THE world globes itself in a drop of dew . . . so do we put our life into every act.” This statement of Emerson is peculiarly applicable to men of genius. Our best poets and musicians have left the indelible impress of their personality upon every line that they penned; and the greater the personality, the more simple the attributes revealed. Indeed, as we approach the mountain peaks of art,—the giants that tower above the centuries,—we shall find that each stands as the embodiment of one extraordinary power—one central idea in which all other faculties focus; and with this idea the artist’s mission is intimately associated.

Our foremost leaders in the domain of art have all been intrusted with such a mission; and the mistake hitherto frequently made has been either to overlook this entirely or oftener to extract it from some particular doctrine or isolated work. This mode of procedure has been applied also to Wagner; and the absence of criticism based on close psychological analysis is here still painfully evident. No man, it is true, has more clearly enunciated his own theories. But the very vastness and complexity of the structure that Wagner has created, necessitates the establishment of an inward organic sequence and development; and it is the failure to grasp this, “*den inneren Faden*,” as the Germans designate it, that has led to a multitude of conflicting opinions, a few of which it may be well here to review.

Some time ago I listened to the following very characteristic discussion as to the merits of the Wagnerian drama; said A: “Wagner is to me nothing but a continuous crash, bang! I cannot conceive how any one can call so loud and discordant a performance ‘music’!” B (a musician): “But you thoroughly enjoyed the performance of ‘Lohengrin’ which we attended.”

A: "Several of the 'airs' were very beautiful, but the meaningless recitative between them was insufferably tedious." B: "Well, Wagner's music is not easily understood. It is very deep and must be heard often to be appreciated." C: "As for myself, I regard Wagner as the Shakespeare of the nineteenth century; *some of his scenes, however, might well be curtailed, as they extend the performances to an unnecessary degree.*"

All these strictures apply to the interpreters of Wagner, but not to himself; and it is to the same source that we must trace that widespread misconception, according to which the great composer is pictured as something colossal, titanic and ponderous—as a sort of Bismarck of music, capable of wielding and manipulating great masses of tone. Nothing could be further from the truth than this conception; for the rich expressional material that Wagner has employed is but the efflorescence of an exquisitely delicate and sensitive nature. It is not my purpose here to show how these peculiar views originated; suffice it to say that they are thoroughly erroneous. Not less so is the idea that Wagner was primarily a poet. On the contrary, his was the most distinctively musical organization on record—*i. e.*, if we apply the composer's own definition of the musical element as the direct expression or efflux of the emotional nature. Here lies the key to the proper comprehension of Wagner's life and mission. Although in view of his stupendous achievement the statement may appear somewhat paradoxical, Wagner was not *primarily* a poet compelled to draw upon external life for his material, but a vibrant instrument in the mighty hand of Nature, destined through suffering to sound the depths of the human heart and to reveal its possibilities.

Richard Wagner was the embodiment of the emotional nature in its perfect purity and infinite intensity. The emotional nature of man, *per se* (*das menschliche Gemueth*), is the most delicately perfect organization of which we have knowledge, constituting as it does the very kernel of our being, the invisible, delicate, yet most powerful bond of union between us. Here, above all, is the one element which may be called purely and distinctly human; for, while all communications by means of the intellect presuppose a knowledge of the external world, the manifestations of our emotional nature are innate and instinctively understood. To illustrate this let me ask, What is it that distinguishes the human

body, so delicate and exposed, from every other organism? Is it not the possibility of intensest suffering and of intensest sympathy? And does not this element find its deepest and most direct expression in the human voice? Our very first manifestation when, laid bare to all impressions, we are ushered forth into the world, is the cry with which we announce our entry into the communion of man; and this cry is the distinctively human appeal for sympathy, which can find a response only in another breast.

In Richard Wagner these conditions were infinitely intensified; and it would seem as if Nature had kept all knowledge of the world from him in order to develop his deep inner life alone. Thus, from the beginning to the end of his career, where he introduces "*Parsifal*" to us,

"Through pity knowing, the artless one,"

Wagner was and remained a child. He was ever distinguished by purity, innocence, guilelessness and impulsiveness, the charming attributes of childhood; and it is this impulsiveness—the intense emotional fervor of his nature—combined with the other characteristics I have mentioned that gave direction to his genius.

At the beginning of Wagner's career we notice a complete absence of aim or purpose. One study, one pursuit after another, is taken up in fleet succession; and into each he throws himself with all the ardor of his being, to the point of complete self-surrender. Gradually, however, he is brought into closer contact with the arts, Shakespeare, Mozart and Beethoven being the powerful magnets that attract him; and their influence was to be permanent. For the communication between men of genius from century to century is instantaneous as the passage of the electric spark from continent to continent; the infinite here, despite dissimilarity of endowment, ever attracting the infinite. The influence of his predecessors, therefore, in the case of Wagner, manifested itself in accordance with his exuberant emotional nature. In the arts he beheld a wealth of expressional material; and this was employed by him according to the conditions of the time and in a purely superficial manner. A vast amount of material was to be used in the presentation of some drama modelled upon a scale of unparalleled magnificence—"the poetry of Shakespeare and the music of Beethoven were to be combined in it." Some of Wagner's earlier works are the wildest extra-

ganzas. It is but natural that such a nature should have been powerfully attracted by Italian grand opera; and "Rienzi" reveals Wagner in the full storm and stress of his early career.

He who has the gift to read between the lines should be able to trace even upon the first pages of Wagner's "Autobiography,"* in these short, hurried sentences and incredibly rapid transitions, the inevitable psychological reaction which was to take place within his nature. As a child, in the eager pursuit of a coveted object, will stray through many devious paths until at last it finds itself empty-handed and alone amid strangers, so Richard Wagner, in the ardor of his soul, had pursued all the phantoms of modern life until at last, completely disappointed and disheartened, he felt that he was a solitary wanderer upon the face of the earth.

SIEGMUND.

"Where'er I fared,
 If for a friend
 Or fair I wished,
 I could not win what I asked for;
 Ill luck lay on me.
 When recking I was right,
 Wrong to others I wrought;
 And things ill, as I thought,
 Others hotly upheld.
 I fell in feud
 Wherever I fared;
 Strife came
 Wherever I strayed;
 Did I seek pleasure,
 Pain but appeared;
 They call me then 'woeful' rightly;
 Unwitting, woe I must wreak."
 ("Walküre," Act I, Corder's Translation.)

The faculties requisite to modern society, calculation and reflection, were exactly the reverse of those which existed in the nature of Wagner. Imagine this man surrounded by the calm, conventional, case-hardened natures among which he was thrown and everywhere misunderstood and coldly rebuffed by them—in his intensely rapid career through modern life, meeting with disappointment after disappointment—is it astonishing that Wagner, at last completely disheartened, should have felt that society

* A brief autobiography, written early in life.

had cast him out? It is useless, however, to condemn society for the trials it imposes on the individual. The conditions under which the nature of Wagner might have expanded simply did not exist. They were to come from the depths of his own soul, which was to be tried in the crucible of suffering. While many may have suffered greater actual hardships than he, I know of but few that have been exposed to such intense spiritual anguish. For degrees of suffering cannot be measured by external circumstances, but by the nature of those upon whom this suffering is inflicted. It is very characteristic of our age to judge men in the lump and to make the individual conform to the arbitrary standard thus created. This is an error. The same keen blast which will but stimulate a powerfully resistant nature will chill a human being just as perfectly but more delicately organized to the marrow. It is upon this psychological basis that we must follow the second period of Wagner's career.

With slender means, friendless and despairing, Wagner sailed for England inspired by a faint hope of bettering his condition. Tossed and buffeted about for weeks, shipwrecked on the coast of Norway, and again subjected to the mercy of wind and wave, he finally despaired of ever reaching shore. While thus brooding over his fate, the spectre-like figure of ancient tradition became invested with a fearful reality. Like Vanderdecken, Wagner felt that he, too, was doomed to roam forever upon the ocean of life; and as to the Flying Dutchman, so to Wagner, yearning for peace and rest, there appeared far upon the edge of an apparently endless horizon a gleam of hope; and in that distant sunrise he beheld the radiant figure of Senta with arm outstretched to lift his doom. Faintly from far across the deep arose beckoning strains of sweetest music, the welcome of that loving heart that would save him from perdition.

This opera, "The Flying Dutchman," with which Wagner enters upon the second period of his career, has a deep significance. We must pass with Dante through Hell and Purgatory before we can behold Beatrice, an angel in Paradise. Goethe, in his "Faust," reveals the sum of his manifold experiences; yet it is in woman that he at last finds the guardian angel of man, and to him also she appears as a celestial vision. In "The Flying Dutchman," Wagner has transported her from the clouds. She becomes a palpable reality, the actor in a great human drama, in which

the actual life of the author himself is depicted. It is true that the early folk-lore furnished the material and the inspiration for this drama. Yet these legends and traditions of the folk, which had been handed down through the ages, had become mere phantoms. It was Wagner, in his infinite desire for a closer communion of the heart, who filled and reanimated the extremely slender materials which he found with the breath of life.

The tragic element in the nature of Wagner lay in the fact that he was swayed entirely by the irresistible impulse of his intensely emotional nature. From this point of view we can understand the velocity with which he was hurled from one extreme to another: from the fearful spiritual suffering, the utter isolation, darkness and despair, depicted in "The Flying Dutchman," to the Bacchanalian revel with which "Tannhäuser" opens. A wild longing takes possession of the wanderer who had so long been condemned to roam alone and forsaken amid darkness and tempest—a longing to forget the past, to flee from it as from a fearful dream and to plunge once more into the fulness of life. We can almost hear his frenzied cry, "Back, back to life's glowing hearth and to the warm embrace of love!" In the "Tannhäuser" we behold Wagner seeking that material enjoyment of life which has ever been the dream of youth. He enters into it with all the intensity, yet with all the purity of his being. For it is not sensual pleasure alone that he seeks, but that alluring vision which we believe tangible, yet which ever flees from us as we pursue it. Never before has the fundamental conflict to which every undegenerate human soul is subjected been described as in this opera.

In the National Gallery at Berlin there is a masterpiece of art. A youth, mounted upon a steed in mad career, is pursuing a fleeing vision, a female form of ravishing beauty. Before him is an abyss bridged by a single fragile plank; at his elbow, guiding the bridle, is Death's grinning image. But the youth neither sees nor hears in the madness of his pursuit. Convert this picture into sound and you have an approximate idea of the Bacchanale of the "Tannhäuser," indescribable in words—a wild dream, an intoxication of the senses, the Inferno of the passions. It is with a cry of despair that Tannhäuser at last awakens out of the night that threatens to engulf him: "Ah, that I might once more behold the blessed light of day! that I might find peace,

though it were in death!" We know the rest, and that the fearful conflict between the irresistible fascination of the senses and the desire for redemption was stilled at last by that divine agency, the noble love of a pure and unselfish woman.

And now it is directly in the heart of woman that Wagner, in his infinite longing to find an abiding-place upon the ocean of life, seeks his ideal. That sense of isolation which characterizes "The Flying Dutchman" becomes greatly intensified upon the completion of "Tannhäuser." It was caused partly by the psychological struggle through which Wagner had passed in the latter opera, but was in a still higher degree the result of concomitant external circumstances. Wagner himself tells us that with "Tannhäuser" he had signed his death-warrant so far as the true recognition of his personality by modern society was concerned.* Thus completely isolated, Wagner realizes his affinity to Lohengrin.

Lohengrin, by reason of his lofty station elevated far above his fellow men, is yet alone, for his heart is barren of love—a truth how wide in its significance! The exalted knight, a vision almost celestial, descends out of the infinite, out of the clouds, from the land of nowhere, to mingle with mankind in order that he may find his salvation in the heart of the woman who will love him for his own sake alone. He conceals his name, his lineage, his rank, in order that the longing of his soul may be fulfilled. *But the human heart desires the fullest confidence of the beloved object, that heart which Lohengrin so earnestly seeks, but which he does not comprehend.* Thus, at last, the spell is broken when Elsa, in the fulness of her love, implores Lohengrin to break the one barrier between them.

It is in "Tristan and Isolde," the greatest drama of love ever written, that Wagner reaches the climax of his longing. In "Lohengrin" it is the heroine who is completely unselfish. It is she who sacrifices all, who, in the intensity of her human passion, seeks to break through the reserve that Lohengrin so jealously guards. Name and fame, earthly power and glory, even death, are as nothing to the love she cherishes for the object of her affection, whom she wishes to possess wholly. In "Tristan and Isolde" the complete surrender of two human souls to the love-passion is at last realized, and the tragic element lies in the

* Wagner: "*Eine Mittheilung an meine Freunde.*"

greatness of the sacrifice. Never did a more glorious possession sink away so suddenly before the irresistible spirit of love. Tristan and Isolde are willing to renounce all but honor; and realizing that their condition is insupportable, they seek to put an end to their lives. But love is triumphant over death. They must live and suffer to the last, until consumed, as it were, by their very passion they sink into the night together united in an everlasting embrace. Having traced the development of Wagner through the second period* of his career, I shall now endeavor to point out the deeper significance of the work accomplished.

The word "sympathy," in its widest significance, denotes "*Mitgefuehl*," a fellow feeling, and is inseparable from the idea of fellowship or fraternity. It is, therefore, in its very essence completely unselfish. It is not this principle, enunciated by the Founder of Christianity, but that of suffering, evolved amid conditions when the actual destruction of the world itself was considered imminent, which has ever been accentuated by the Church. The element of sympathy was relegated to a region beyond the clouds; and men could but long for that which practically did not exist on earth. With the consciousness of a sympathetic bond of union or fraternity, we at once joyously enter as individuals into that which is universal; suffering without sympathy, on the other hand, becomes self-centred. It desires all, and gives nothing; and the element of the "ego" enters into its loftiest aspirations. Within the nineteenth century, and, in a measure, at the close of the eighteenth, this longing at last degenerated into a contemptible, petty, self-bewailing spirit, disgusting us by its impotence and justly subjected to ridicule. This spirit may be said more particularly to lie at the basis of that class of the literature referred to in which the emotions and the social relations play a leading part. "Woman" is the primal moving agent of all this bric-à-brac, yet what pitiful inward beggars are her devotees. Centuries ago, however, this spirit of yearning had a loftier significance; for then it was the expression of a need felt by the entire community, and individuals, otherwise most powerful and heroic, were subject to its influence. During this period it is woman, although entirely *spiritualized*, who becomes the intercessor in Heaven; and with the greatest poets, from Dante to

* I believe the first period should terminate with "Rienzi," the second with "Tristan," and the third and last with "Parsifal."

Goethe within the past century, it is the divinely feminine heart that pleads for the salvation of man. An eternal truth lies at the basis of this sentiment. For not only the soul of genius, but the ancient spirit of the folk instinctively recognizes woman in the highest type as completely unselfish; and thus she stands as the highest symbol of human *society*. To the early Christian communities she so remained; and even when the soul of man had become homeless on earth, it still fondly clung to the heart of woman as emblematic of the deepest human associations. Wagner, throughout the entire second period of his career, unconsciously sought human society under natural conditions. We have seen how, guided by the innate impulses of his being, he at first seeks the ideal woman—*i. e.*, the *symbol* of this society. This he finds among the early Christian communities and here his own psychological condition finds support.

“The Flying Dutchman,” “Tannhäuser,” “Lohengrin” and “Tristan” are, therefore, the great *trials* to which Wagner was subjected. In these he had sounded the depths of the human heart. He was as one who, completely isolated, sinks ever deeper into the shadow of night and death, and in the extremity of his need cries out into the boundless void for sympathy. This cry becomes ever more tragic in its significance, while the answer to it is ever as the voice of the Magdalene, soothing and comforting; until at last to the question of Tristan (Act II), it is as if we heard the words: “Ay! Even into the shadow of death, my beloved, will I follow thee!” and here the spirit of longing is stilled forever in death—the *death of self*. Such is the sublime signification of the earlier dramas; and he who regards them merely as beautiful operas, unconscious of the fact that they constitute the Passion of *the most profoundly human of all poets*, will be incapable of grasping their inner psychological sequence and their bearing upon the revelation that Wagner was now destined to receive.

Wagner never obtained a full dramatic realization of his immediate psychological condition until he had discovered a historic analogy. Each of his dramas owes its inception to such a discovery; and however meagre the material, it kindled into life at his touch. This ceaseless search or exploration for the environment befitting his condition is an idea underlying all the work of the man whom in “The Flying Dutchman” we behold as the

Ahasuerus of the sea, in "Tannhäuser" as a pilgrim, and in "Lohengrin" as a stranger. I have hitherto detailed in their proper sequence Wagner's psychological experiences only. Broadly viewed, however, they are the successive stages of his career—the career of a solitary wanderer who penetrates ever farther into the dim background of time; and we must hold fast this truth to realize that upon the completion of "Tristan," Wagner's actual position very closely approximated that of the explorer who, completely exhausted, despairingly succumbs at last to his unremitting search, sinks into insensibility and oblivion, but on awakening finds that, unconsciously to himself, the goal has been reached. Although, perhaps, a slight digression, the following paragraph will prepare the reader more fully to appreciate the vast scope of Wagner's achievement in the "Trilogy":

"Wo der gelehrte Arzt kein Mittel mehr weiss, da wenden wir uns endlich verzweifelnnd wieder an—die Natur."—WAGNER: *"Die Kunst und die Revolution."*

We know that after a long period of bodily or spiritual suffering the senses become preternaturally vivid and susceptible to outward influence and impression. The various exemplifications of this marvellous compensation of nature may be traced from the healthful passivity of the patient who has successfully passed the crisis to the state of clairvoyance distinguishing the prophet whose spirit, broken by incessant trials, has thereby been prepared to receive a revelation. All the great founders of our religions, Buddha, Moses, Jesus and Mahomet, have thus received their mission in the solitude or the wilderness; and the same psychological phenomenon is repeated in the experience of Richard Wagner and in a no less exalted sense: for the Nibelungen saga, the deep import of which Wagner was now destined to reveal, is also a "Book of Genesis"—the Genesis of that Germanic race which is revolutionizing the world.

A great revelation probably comes first as a sudden gleam, gradually broadening into the refulgence of day; and the complex psychological phenomena which immediately led to the conception of the "Trilogy" may perhaps very approximately, if not accurately, be expressed by extending the before-mentioned simile. In "Tristan and Isolde" the power of suffering and of longing alike are broken; the idea of self is annihilated; and the wanderer, on awakening from insensibility and oblivion, hears about

him the deep voice of Nature, which to him seems to come from the infinite depths of existence. It is the first gleam of a revelation; and to Wagner, who here experiences a veritable rebirth at the hands of Nature, the great fabric of the Nibelungen saga, which pictures the genesis of *all* creation, now becomes invested with the reality of dramatic conviction. Nature had whispered to him her secret, and with the same emotional intensity with which he had before endeavored to give expression to his *own* suffering he now endeavors to portray the primal unfolding of the deepest and most fundamental passions of the human breast in the "Trilogy."

In the ancient northern saga, that open "Book of Genesis" of the Germanic race, all nature is figured as a tree of gigantic proportions whose roots are deeply imbedded in the heart of the world, whose mighty trunk soars aloft, piercing the clouds, whose innumerable branches constantly spread and extend in every direction, covering the universe. "The rustle of it is the Noise of Existence, onwards as of old! It grows there, the breath of human Passion rustling through it; or stormtossed, the storm-wind howling through it like the voice of all the gods."* It is the victorious growth and expansion of the tree of life as it sprouts forth from the very *root* of being that Wagner now reveals.

If we hold fast this fundamental symbol of the northern saga, we may trace the rise of Wagner's elemental drama of existence from root to crown. The application of the special points of analogy as bearing upon the "Trilogy" must be left to the reader; what is of immediate importance here is to point out the fundamental signification of the great master's achievement which, in its scope, was (1) primary, elemental, and (2) perennial.

PRIMARY.

In the "Nibelungen Trilogy" we behold the germination, the budding and, ultimately, the growth and expansion of the whole tree of life in accordance with natural laws. Primeval creation arises before us in rugged grandeur. We become conscious of the sway of elementary forces, and finally youthful man steps upon the scene. We behold the human race as it springs from the very fountain-head of being, in glorious communion with Nature, freely developing under her mighty influence and stimulated by

* Thomas Carlyle: "Heroes and Hero Worship."

her to deeds by which the very tree of life itself is shaken to its basis; these deeds centring in the eternal conflict between love and ambition, between the fascination of woman and world dominion—in the *ultima ratio* of all human endeavor.

PERENNIAL.

All this is elemental, and with adequate representation should appeal to us with the power of a revelation. But the tree of life is also perennial. Its most glorious flowering is the human race, whose free and spontaneous activity in its highest form should ever *anew* inspire to artistic representation. Such are the faint outlines of the vast fabric that Wagner has reared—a fabric so thoroughly grounded in nature that I have hitherto thought it advisable to hold fast that fundamental symbol which must here ever constitute our surest guide.

The efforts toward a re-establishment of a rational relation between nature and man may be said to date from the period of the Renaissance. Not until the advent of Rousseau, however, did the social element become strongly accentuated; and it is more particularly within our own day that to the question of physical human needs (now pressing for solution) there have been super-added those bearing upon the deeper relations of the individual to society. It was reserved for Richard Wagner to elucidate the *crowning phase* of this evolution of centuries by establishing the sacred relation between the human individual of the *highest type*, the *Poet Priest* or *Kuenstler* and the *Society of the Future* (1), enunciating as the *Religion of the Future* (2), the voluntary and free representation of the eternal *Drama* of human existence (3).

THE DRAMA.

To revert to my fundamental symbol, “The tree of life reaches its most perfect flowering in the human race whose free and spontaneous activity *in its highest form* should ever *anew* inspire to artistic representation.” Now, this highest form of activity, or, to put it somewhat differently,—for at present activity cannot be dissociated from purpose in the narrower sense,—society attains its most perfect bloom in the human being whose excess of individual life stamps him as hyperhuman (*uebermenschlich*). He is the hero of the race; and his life, its budding, flowering

and decay becomes the subject of dramatic representation. Here, then, we have hero-worship in the most exalted sense. The individual is all in all. He sets the standard and becomes the centre of the play of life to be enacted (*des freien Lebensspiels*, as it may be called). He, broadly speaking, strikes the leading *motif* from which all others are gradually evolved; it is about him and his deeds that the other characters are grouped; and it is he that invites the obstacles that, as in the case of "Siegfried," *der freie Held*, may be freely opposed, or, as in "Parsifal," successfully resisted.

Now, as to the hero's ideal of life. With the society of the future, according to Wagner, life will have no ulterior aim: it will be its own purpose. With the absence of every form of coercion and unnecessary want the individual will cheerfully perform that for which he is best adapted; and activity, free and unhampered, and relieved from the necessity of supplying immediate wants, will naturally become artistic. Hence, the more the idea of utility wanes, the greater the degree of leisure to which men will attain; and thus life will ultimately become what it is intended to be—play. The foremost actor, however, in this play of life is man himself—free, strong and beautiful—not an artificial, but a natural product; and it is in his deeds that the interest of the community will pinnacle. These deeds will no longer, as in our own day, be directed toward the acquisition of objects of material tenure. Under the stimulus of an environment such as I have mentioned, men will be free to pursue *ideal* ends, as symbolized, for example, in "Siegfried" by the winning of the ring, the token of world dominion through self-sufficient heroism, and in "Parsifal" by the redemption of the beautiful symbol of the Holy Grail.

The "Trilogy" and "Parsifal," apart from their classic beauty, can serve merely as the *prototypes* of this drama; and the artist cannot build upon these unless he also, according to his specific endowment, has experienced a psychological development which will enable him to grasp Wagner's *Lebensanschauung* (view of life) and find support in it. In this sense Wagner has hitherto had no followers, but a number of feeble imitators who have exploited the whole domain of the northern saga in order to write *kraftvolle Germanische musik* (genuine Germanic music). Several have misappropriated in a purely superficial and meaningless

manner the mere technique of his instrumentation; while others—most pitiful of all—have endeavored to write in Wagner's style by imitating his melodic sequences and harmonic construction even to the chord of the ninth—all distinctive characteristics of the great master's intensely emotional nature and, therefore, entirely peculiar to himself. It becomes imperative, therefore, in a discussion of the drama of the future, to point out the distinction here between the specifically Wagnerian (individual) and the universal.

Of the psychology of the drama I have spoken in the preceding paragraphs, and in this sense the "Trilogy" and "Parsifal" can serve only as an inspiration; for the artist capable of constructing a music-drama upon correct psychological principles will undoubtedly arrange his *motifs* according to inward necessity. The immediate value of Wagner's dramatic prototypes, psychologically considered, is briefly this: Siegfried is "the childlike hero," Parsifal, "the guileless innocent." Both mirror the nature of Wagner and present the *nucleus* of a more natural type of man. As Froebel, a kindred spirit, bases the educational system of the future (so much being still unaccomplished here) upon the study of child-nature and expects from this a regeneration of society, Wagner, in "Siegfried" and "Parsifal" presents the childheart—the emblem of simple, pure and innocent manhood, and says in effect: Whomever you may choose as the hero of your play, let his development be perfectly spontaneous and in accordance with natural laws.

Far more direct in its bearing upon the artist of the future is the vast fund of *expressional material* that Wagner has bequeathed to posterity. The combination of all the arts, the establishment of their interrelation, the analysis of the essential nature of each and all, and *their foundation in life*—here is a rich material endowment for the artist. Unfortunately, however, the difficulty here is the failure on the part of Wagner's interpreters, exponents, and so-called "followers" to perceive the foundation of this expressional material in life; and it is this circumstance chiefly that is responsible for our present wholly inadequate conception of the magnitude of Richard Wagner's achievement.

JOSEPH SOHN.